



# Tough Paradise: The Literature of Idaho and the Intermountain West

Annotations by Susan Swetnam, Professor of English,  
Idaho State University

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**3:00 pm, Sunday, September 19** *Presented by*

Where the Morning Light's Still Blue: Personal Essays about Idaho (1994) is a collection of thirty-five contemporary essays, edited by William Studebaker and Rick Arding, which catch a variety of responses and attitudes to the Idaho landscape. Writers from around the state describe their relationships to very particular places and chronicle their inspiration, frustration, love, and sometimes wry reactions. Quite varied in tone and style, the essays chronicle the diversity of writers' voices working in Idaho today.

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**3:00 pm, Sunday, October 3** *Presented by*

Heart of a Western Woman (2nd ed., 1993) is a collection of ten stories by Leslie Leek, set in the eastern Idaho mountains and high desert country. The stories tell of independent women who derive identity and strength from the land and from each other. They are often heroic in the face of loneliness, the death of loved ones, or misunderstandings with the men in their lives.



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**3:00 pm, Sunday, October 17** *Presented by*

Cheerleaders from Gomorrah: Tales from the Lycra Archipelago (1994), a collection of short stories, catches the rootless lives of ski bums, beautiful young people, and hangers-on in Sun Valley. Wickedly funny, its black humor touches on gender conflict, attempts to communicate, and yearning for meaning in a place many of the characters would describe as paradise.

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**3:00 pm, Sunday, October 31** *Presented by*

Housekeeping (1981), Marilynne Robinson's best-selling novel, tells the story of two orphaned girls who grow up under the care of their grandmother, then their two fumbling great-aunts after their grandmother dies, and finally, when the aunts flee, their mother's transient sister. Through Ruth, the central character, we discover that "Loneliness is a absolute state," but we also discover her housekeeping grandmother, who "would scan the shores to see how nearly the state of grace resembled the state of Idaho."

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**3:00 pm, Sunday, November 14** *Presented by Kristin Buck, Idaho State University*

Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place (1991) is an autobiographical account which chronicles a disruptive period in the life of author Terry Tempest Williams. In 1983, several sources of stability and inspiration for Williams were shaken, when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and her beloved Bear River Bird Refuge was threatened by the rising waters of the Great Salt Lake. Critical of less-than-sensitive responses to the land, Williams finds her own peace as she comes to embrace continuity in change, both in the land of her LDS ancestors and in rhythms of her family and her own life.

